

Advance Monthly Retail Sales

CURRENT BUSINESS REPORTS

March 1989

CB-89-60

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The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for March adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences but not for price changes were \$139.4 billion, an increase of 0.1 percent from the previous month and 4.2 percent above March. Total sales in the first quarter were 0.5 percent above the previous quarter and were 5.7 percent above the same quarter a year ago.

Durable goods decreased 0.2 percent from the previous month but were 1.0 percent above the previous year. Furniture stores were up 8.9 percent from March of last year.

Nondurable goods increased 0.3 percent from February and were 6.2 percent above the previous year. General merchandise stores were up 3.9 percent from March last year while food stores were up 7.0 percent in the same period. Eating and drinking establishments were up 9.9 percent from the previous year.

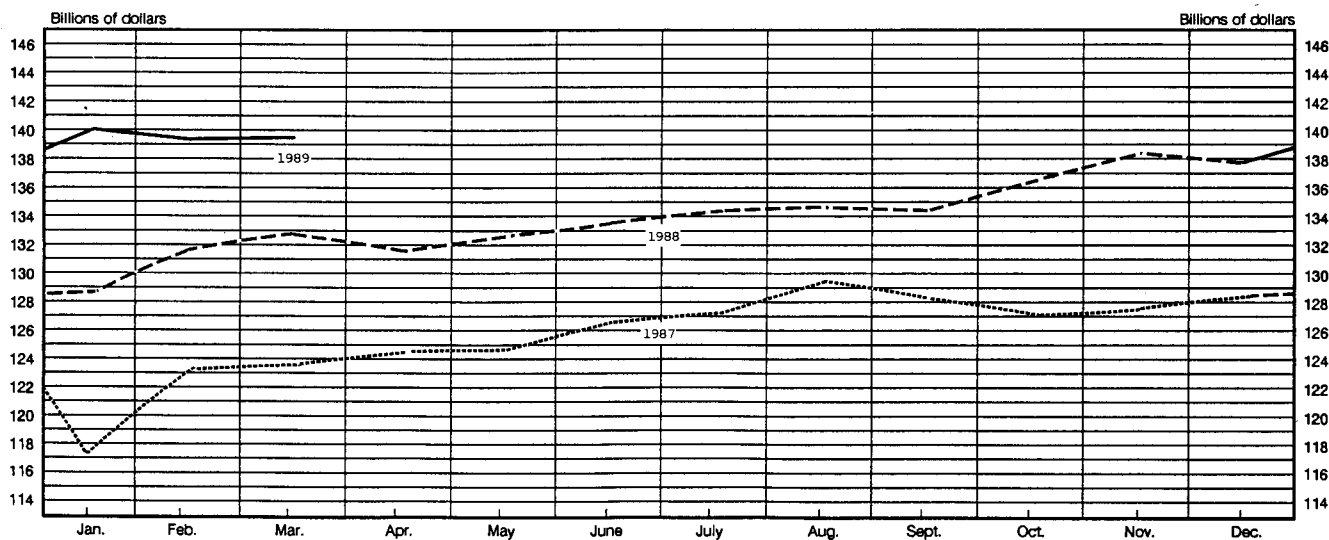
Note: Since this survey is based on a sample, the estimates will differ from the universe values due to both sampling and nonsampling error. For the month-to-month, year-to-year, and quarter-to-quarter percent changes shown at the total, durable, and nondurable levels, the margins of sampling error range from 1.0 to 4.0 percentage points above and below the estimate. See page 4 for a more complete description.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for April is scheduled to be released May 11, 1989 at 8:30 a.m.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

January 1987-March 1989

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences)



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U.S. Department of Commerce
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report, the Monthly Retail Trade report, and the Annual Retail Trade report are available on a single subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. This report is available electronically in CENDATA, the Bureau's on-line information service, through a commercial vendor. For further information, contact Customer Services, DUSD, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, or call (301) 763-4100 or (301) 763-7561.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1989			1988		1989			1988	
		Mar. ² adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ² adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar. ² adv.	Feb. ² prel.
	Retail trade, total.....	139,795	118,689	122,467	133,127	116,551	139,419	139,258	140,040	133,806	131,846
	Total (excl. auto group)...	106,940	91,711	95,234	99,990	88,239	109,024	108,831	108,846	102,847	101,354
	Durable goods, total.....	53,694	44,869	46,036	52,995	45,612	52,794	52,885	53,815	52,260	51,453
52	Building mat., hardware, garden										
	supply, and mobile home dealers..	6,928	5,494	5,880	6,986	5,517	7,362	7,506	7,742	7,382	7,250
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores..	(*)	3,971	4,361	4,921	3,898	(*)	5,410	5,678	5,196	5,076
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	881	952	1,071	852	(*)	1,170	1,175	1,132	1,104
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	32,855	26,978	27,233	33,137	28,312	30,395	30,427	31,194	30,959	30,492
551,2,5,	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous										
6,7,9	automotive dealers.....	30,485	25,029	25,134	30,679	26,242	27,942	27,997	28,725	28,433	27,977
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	22,550	22,877	27,424	23,824	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	1,949	2,099	2,458	2,070	(*)	2,430	2,469	2,526	2,515
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and										
	equipment stores.....	7,908	7,011	7,505	7,259	6,511	8,246	8,261	8,264	7,569	7,405
571	Furniture and home furnishings..	(*)	3,491	3,719	3,725	3,270	(*)	4,074	4,123	3,763	3,678
5722,32	Household appliance, radio,										
	and TV stores.....	(*)	3,012	3,256	3,064	2,788	(*)	3,594	3,555	3,309	3,219
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	649	745	757	674	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	86,101	73,820	76,431	80,132	70,939	86,625	86,373	86,225	81,546	80,393
53	General merchandise group stores..	14,348	11,038	10,954	13,747	10,667	15,553	15,739	15,985	14,969	14,760
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)	12,055	9,160	9,147	11,508	8,838	13,061	13,199	13,353	12,509	12,344
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts.)	(*)	9,489	9,482	11,965	9,196	(*)	13,693	13,822	12,949	12,844
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	523	507	658	529	(*)	676	683	665	662
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	1,355	1,300	1,581	1,300	(*)	1,864	1,949	1,795	1,754
54	Food stores.....	29,377	25,968	27,204	27,022	24,747	28,915	28,847	28,730	27,032	26,655
541	Grocery stores.....	27,531	24,364	25,609	25,339	23,184	27,071	27,041	26,928	25,339	24,956
554	Gasoline service stations.....	8,364	7,590	7,985	8,236	7,583	8,587	8,547	8,477	8,447	8,260
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	7,018	5,089	5,480	6,527	4,878	6,942	6,967	7,189	6,602	6,478
561	Men's and boys' clothing										
	and furnishings stores.....	(*)	550	642	673	559	(*)	782	808	773	770
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty										
	stores, furriers.....	(*)	2,028	2,213	2,521	2,000	(*)	2,683	2,812	2,557	2,567
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	1,192	1,209	1,561	1,138	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	908	1,023	1,305	872	(*)	1,212	1,280	1,181	1,140
58	Eating and drinking places.....	13,902	12,068	12,497	12,553	11,345	13,944	13,871	13,778	12,693	12,634
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	5,304	4,826	4,898	4,883	4,544	5,246	5,257	5,129	4,864	4,763
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,386	1,425	1,457	1,344	(*)	1,650	1,623	1,589	1,557
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department										
	store merchandise).....	(*)	216	235	278	223	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57	GAF ⁴	(*)	27,269	28,106	31,707	25,984	(*)	36,256	36,746	34,033	33,486
594											

*Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.

NA Not available. ^r Revised

¹ Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-89-02.

² Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

³ Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

⁴ GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise.

Note: Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Mar. 1989 advance from--		Feb. 1989 preliminary from--		Jan. 1989 through Mar. 1989	
		Feb. 1989 prelim.	Mar. 1988 final	Jan. 1989 final	Feb. 1988 final	Oct. 1988 through Dec. 1988	Jan. 1988 through Mar. 1988
	Retail trade, total.....	+0.1	+4.2	-0.6	+5.6	+0.5	+5.7
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+0.2	+6.0	0.0	+7.4	+1.6	+7.2
	Durable goods, total.....	-0.2	+1.0	-1.7	+2.8	-0.8	+3.5
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	-1.9	-0.3	-3.0	+3.5	-1.2	+4.8
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-0.1	-1.8	-2.5	-0.2	-3.0	+0.7
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-0.2	-1.7	-2.5	+0.1	-3.3	+1.0
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.2	+8.9	0.0	+11.6	+4.4	+11.5
	Nondurable goods, total.....	+0.3	+6.2	+0.2	+7.4	+1.4	+7.1
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-1.2	+3.9	-1.5	+6.6	+0.5	+6.0
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	-1.0	+4.4	-1.2	+6.9	+0.2	+6.2
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....	(NA)	(NA)	-0.9	+6.6	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	+0.2	+7.0	+0.4	+8.2	+2.2	+8.1
541	Grocery stores.....	+0.1	+6.8	+0.4	+8.4	+2.2	+8.2
554	Gasoline service stations.....	+0.5	+1.7	+0.8	+3.5	+0.2	+2.1
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-0.4	+5.1	-3.1	+7.5	-0.4	+8.1
58	Eating and drinking places.....	+0.5	+9.9	+0.7	+9.8	+1.7	+9.9
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.2	+7.9	+2.5	+10.4	+5.3	+9.0

Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Group II Companies, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted ¹		
		Feb. 1989 prelim.	Jan. 1989 final	Feb. 1988	Feb. 1989 prelim.	Jan. 1989 final	Feb. ² 1988
	Retail trade, total.....	42,325	43,742	40,489	52,078	52,494	48,265
53	General merchandise group stores.....	10,244	10,123	9,844	14,703	14,895	13,684
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	8,864	8,833	8,562	12,828	12,952	11,975
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....	9,180	9,146	8,904	13,247	13,352	12,436
533	Variety stores.....	402	386	396	539	548	512
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.....	978	904	886	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	14,821	15,636	14,217	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	14,596	15,423	13,992	16,128	16,099	14,997
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	2,623	2,734	2,467	3,784	3,884	3,463
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	1,069	1,120	1,027	1,477	1,545	1,384
566	Shoe stores.....	536	597	508	752	782	697
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	2,869	2,924	2,639	3,195	3,071	2,822

NA Not available. ² Revised

¹Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-89-02.

²Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Note: The Group II component of the sample consists of companies which had 11 or more retail establishments according to the most recent update of multi-establishment files and which were selected with certainty (i.e., their sales size exceeded specified dollar volume cutoffs which vary by kind of business).



SAMPLE DESIGN AND RELIABILITY OF DATA

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting of sales by a small subsample of the Bureau's retail survey panel. Because of the early reporting, the advance estimates can differ from the subsequent estimates which are based on monthly reports obtained from the full sample of retail stores. In addition, sampling variability between the subsample used for the advance estimates and the full sample can cause a difference.

Percentage differences between advance and full sample preliminary estimates of month-to-month percentage change in seasonally adjusted total retail store sales have ranged from approximately -0.3 percent to +0.9 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.3 percent for the past 12 months. For individual kind-of-business groups, these differences tend to be higher. Sampling variability of and revisions to advance-to-preliminary estimates are shown in table 4 below.

Preliminary estimates for February 1989 and final estimates for January 1989 based on the full sample will be published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for February (BR-89-02). The complete report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and will present a description of revisions, and the techniques used in developing the estimates.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, indicates a range about the estimate which corresponds to a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the estimate is up .8 percent and the margin of sampling error is 1.2 percentage points above or below the estimate, then the indicated range is down .4 percent to up 2.0 percent. If the range contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. The Monthly Retail Trade Report includes explanations of confidence intervals and sampling variability along with additional measures of sampling variability.

Table 4. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of Business	Estimated coefficient of Variation in percent of the						Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the Advance-to-preliminary percent change								
		Advance-to- preliminary ratio		Ratio to same month a year ago	Dollar volume sales est.	Ratio of current quarter to prev. quarter										
							Range ¹		Median	Median	Median	Median	Range ²		Mean	Aver. of absolut. diff.
							From	To					From	To		
52 55 ex. 554 551,2,5, 6,7,9 57	Retail trade, total.....	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.0	-0.3	+0.9	+0.1	0.3					
	Total (excl. auto).	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.9	-1.0	+1.8	0.0	0.4					
	Durable goods, total..	1.4	1.7	1.6	2.3	1.7	2.2	-1.6	+1.8	+0.3	1.0					
	Building materials, group stores.....	0.6	3.6	1.6	3.9	3.3	3.1	-5.2	+1.5	-0.9	1.6					
	Automotive dealers.....	1.7	2.2	1.9	3.1	2.3	3.0	-2.1	+2.7	+0.4	1.2					
	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.2	2.2	1.5	3.7	2.4	3.2	-2.5	+2.8	+0.3	1.2					
	Furniture, home furn. and equipment stores.....	1.6	2.3	1.9	3.7	3.3	2.7	-3.3	+4.4	+0.5	1.5					
	Nondur. stores, total...	0.5	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.7	0.9	-0.8	+0.7	0.0	0.4					
	General merch. group, total. Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.).....	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.5	-2.6	+1.8	-0.2	0.8					
	Food stores.....	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	-2.1	+2.0	-0.2	0.8					
54 541	Grocery stores.....	0.8	1.4	1.0	1.6	1.3	1.6	-0.9	+0.8	+0.1	0.3					
		0.3	1.1	0.5	1.8	1.4	1.6	-0.8	+0.9	+0.1	0.3					
554	Gasoline service stations...	0.7	1.2	0.8	3.0	2.2	2.8	-1.4	+2.3	-0.1	1.0					
56	Apparel and acc. stores....	1.2	3.4	1.5	2.4	1.8	1.8	-2.8	+2.2	-0.5	1.3					
58	Eating and drinking	0.8	1.3	1.1	2.7	2.3	2.6	-1.7	+1.8	+0.3	0.9					
591	Drug and proprietary	0.4	0.7	0.5	2.3	1.7	2.1	-1.6	+1.3	-0.1	0.7					

¹ The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates unadjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of March - July 1988.

² The ranges shown for the retail trade total are based on sales estimates adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences for the 12-month period, March 1988 - February 1989. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period May 1987-April 1988.

Note: Coefficients of variation for the ratio of current quarter to current quarter a-year-ago estimates are approximately the same as those for the ratio of current quarter to previous quarter. See appendix B, Reliability of Data, in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion on the measures of sampling variability.